

WEEK ONE: INTRODUCTION TO ORGANISATION OF KNOWLEDGE

Topic: Definition of Key Terms – Classification, Schemes of Classification, and Classification Schedule

Introduction

Organisation of knowledge is one of the core functions of any library and information centre. It involves the systematic arrangement of recorded information in such a way that users can easily locate, identify, and retrieve the information they need without confusion or unnecessary delay. Every library aims to provide information in an organised form because a library without organisation is like a market without order – full of materials but difficult to navigate.

One of the major techniques used in organising library materials is **classification**. Classification ensures that every item in the library is placed in its proper position, based on the subject it treats. It allows users to find materials on the same topic together on the same shelf. Before a librarian can effectively classify materials, it is important to understand some foundational terms such as *classification*, *classification scheme*, and *classification schedule*.

Meaning of Classification

The word *classification* comes from the Latin word *classis*, meaning "group." In general terms, classification means arranging or grouping things that have similar characteristics into classes or categories.

In the library context, **classification** refers to the systematic arrangement of books and other information materials according to their subjects or contents. It is the process by which library materials are assigned to specific subject areas and given a notation or number that represents that subject.

For instance, in the **Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC)** scheme, all books on Education are placed around the number **370**, while books on History are around **900**. This means that if a library user is interested in education, they can go directly to the 370 section and find several related materials.

Therefore, library classification is both a **physical arrangement** (placing books on shelves according to subject) and an **intellectual process** (analysing the subject content of each material before assigning a class mark).

Classification is not limited to books alone – it is also applied to other materials such as journals, audiovisuals, and digital resources in electronic databases. The ultimate goal of classification is to bring together all materials on the same subject so that users can easily access them.

Objectives of Classification

The main objectives of classification include:

1. To arrange library materials in a systematic and logical order.
2. To make it easy for users to locate materials on the same subject.
3. To facilitate quick retrieval of information.
4. To save time for both users and library staff.
5. To make the library appear neat and organised.
6. To help in collection development and subject analysis.

Definition of a Classification Scheme

A **classification scheme** is the overall system or framework that provides the structure, notation, and guidelines used for classifying materials. It is a set of rules and a plan that guides how subjects are divided, arranged, and represented by notations (usually numbers, letters, or a combination of both).

In other words, a classification scheme is like the *blueprint* that directs the librarian on how to assign class numbers to materials.

A good classification scheme should be logical, comprehensive, flexible, and capable of accommodating new subjects as knowledge expands. It must also have a clear notation system that allows for easy identification and arrangement of materials.

Examples of popular classification schemes include:

1. **Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC)** developed by Melvil Dewey in 1876.
2. **Library of Congress Classification (LCC)** developed by the Library of Congress, Washington D.C.
3. **Universal Decimal Classification (UDC)**, an adaptation of DDC used mostly in Europe.
4. **Bliss Classification Scheme** developed by Henry Evelyn Bliss.
5. **Colon Classification** developed by S. R. Ranganathan, an Indian librarian.

There are also subject-specific schemes such as:

1. **Elizabeth Moys' Law Classification Scheme** used mainly for law libraries.
2. **National Library of Medicine (NLM) Classification Scheme** for medical libraries.

These schemes differ in structure and notation, but they all serve the same purpose – organising knowledge for easy access.

Definition of a Classification Schedule

A **classification schedule** is the actual document or book that contains the arranged list of subjects and their notations. It is the part of the classification scheme that shows how knowledge is divided and subdivided into classes and subclasses.

The schedule usually presents subjects in a logical order, often from general to specific. For example, in the DDC scheme, the number **300** stands for *Social Sciences*. Under that, we have subdivisions such as:

- 370 – Education
- 330 – Economics
- 340 – Law
- 350 – Public Administration

Each of these can be further subdivided. For instance, under 370 (Education), we have:

- 371 – Schools and their activities
- 372 – Primary education
- 378 – Higher education

Therefore, when classifying a book on *higher education in Nigeria*, the librarian will consult the classification schedule and find **378.5669**, where ".5669" represents Nigeria.

In summary, a **classification schedule** acts as the *map* that shows the exact position of every subject in the scheme. Without the schedule, the librarian cannot correctly assign class numbers.

Relationship Between the Three Concepts

These three concepts – classification, scheme of classification, and classification schedule – are closely related but distinct.

Classification is the *process* of arranging materials by subject.

Scheme of classification is the *system or framework* used to carry out the classification.

Classification schedule is the *tool or manual* that contains the list of subjects and their notations.

To put it simply, classification is *what you do*, the scheme is *how you do it*, and the schedule is *where you find the information needed to do it*.

For example, if the library decides to classify using the **Dewey Decimal Scheme**, then the DDC manual (which contains the schedule) is what the librarian will consult to find the right numbers to assign to each subject.

Importance of Classification in the Library

1. It brings orderliness to the library collection.
2. It saves time by helping users locate materials easily.
3. It allows related subjects to be kept together, making research more efficient.
4. It supports effective shelving and shelf-reading by library staff.
5. It helps in the creation of catalogues and subject indexes.
6. It enhances knowledge discovery and browsing.
7. It aids in library cooperation and resource sharing, since many libraries use similar schemes.

Classwork / Assignment

Visit your university library and write down three different class marks you observe on the book spines. Try to identify which scheme is being used.